



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Governor Locke declares February 19 "Potato Lover's Day"

OLYMPIA – Gov. Gary Locke has proclaimed Tuesday, Feb. 19 "Potato Lover's Day" in Washington. The Washington State Potato Commission will celebrate Potato Lover's Day by hosting a free potato bar for the first 2,000 visitors to the Capitol Rotunda between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. The potato bar will feature Washington grown potatoes.

"This is always a popular event in the rotunda," said Pat Boss, executive director of the Potato Commission. "Legislators, staff and tourists all get to feast on great baked potatoes, meet potato growers and receive information about Washington potatoes."

Potatoes are one of the state's most valuable commodities, feeding around \$3 billion into the economy each year. Washington growers can produce up to 60,000 pounds of potatoes per acre, which is a higher yield per acre than growers achieve anywhere in the world. Potatoes are the state's third largest crop after apples and wheat. Last year, Washington growers produced more than 4.7 million tons of potatoes on 160,000 acres.

About 90 percent of all potatoes grown in Washington are marketed out of state. A significant portion of the harvest goes to Asia and Latin America through the ports of Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. Washington accounts for about one-third of all potatoes exported from the United States, most of them processed into frozen french fries or dehydrated products.

The Washington State Potato Commission (WSPC) represents the state's approximately 300 potato growers. February is National Potato Month. For more information about Washington potatoes, visit the WSPC Web site at www.potatoes.com.

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Note to editors: Text of the governor's proclamation is available on the WSDA Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov/communications/2002/attachments/PotatoDayProc2002.pdf>.